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SUBJ: CIVIL SOCIETY AND G8-BMENA GOVERNMENTS MEET AT  
SIXTH FORUM FOR THE FUTURE

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11. (SBU) Summary. The Sixth Forum for the Future, co-chaired by Morocco and Italy, was held in Marrakesh November 2-3 and was attended by representatives of the G8 and Broader Middle East North Africa (BMENA) countries, international organizations (IOs), and civil society groups. The Forum focused on themes of Economic Reform, Political Reform, and Human Development and Human Security, as outlined in three preparatory workshops held in Beirut (September 25-26), Rabat (October 5-6), and Doha (October 12-13), but other issues also arose, such as continued concern about the Palestinian issue and a complaint from civil society organizations that civil society leaders were marginalized in this year's Forum, despite frequent assurances by BMENA governments that they would not be. Secretary Clinton led the U.S. delegation and delivered a well-received speech following up on President Obama's Cairo speech with specific deliverables. However, there was an apparent disconnect between many of the civil society organizations and the BMENA governments, which seem to have envisioned civil society groups as an instrument for promoting government policies. End summary.

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The Senior Officials' Meeting  
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12. (SBU) The Forum began on November 2 with a Senior Officials' meeting opened by Moroccan Foreign Minister Fassi Fihri, who complimented the work of the three preparatory workshops. In his remarks, he laid out several themes that would recur throughout the Forum:

A) The Forum for the Future is unique because of its cooperation between governments and civil society organizations on the basis of joint responsibility. (Note: The issue of civil society responsibility was raised by several BMENA governments during Forum,

but by and large not by G8 officials or civil society leaders. End note.)

B) Dialogue marked by mutual respect and tolerance, as the Forum epitomizes, is the ideal framework for working out reform efforts in the region.

C) The "trauma" of the global financial crisis meant this Forum would be different from previous ones, and it showed the need for cooperation to advance the reforms needed to achieve peace, stability, and prosperity.

D) There were "deep concerns" regarding the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and actions against the holy monuments of Jerusalem. Almost every BMENA government representative, and many civil society representatives, reiterated this point.

E) Democracy is not a "one-size-fits-all" model, but an evolving process that will be different in each country, based on each country's history and specificities. (Note: As with the theme of civil society responsibility, this was a frequent talking point of BMENA government officials throughout the Forum, but not of civil society representatives or, with the exception of Russia, of the G8 governments. End note.)

13. (SBU) Following Fassi Fihri's remarks, Italy's Director General for the Mediterranean and Middle East Luigi Marras said the Forum process heretofore had not been as "tangible and concrete" as some of

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us would have liked. However, he declared that in the last year Forum cooperation had produced demonstrable results, and he specifically commended the civil society delegations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for the positive changes that took place. He said better understanding between governments and civil society had emerged in the last year as a result of the preparatory workshops. Marras stated that in the BMENA countries human resources, in particular women and youth, are abundant, but also present challenges. Creating policies that properly harness these resources is difficult but necessary because if the region fails to meet these needs the results will be skepticism, cynicism, and extremism. Echoing Fassi Fihri, Marras said the Forum is a unique tool to work toward coordinating policies regionally and internationally.

14. (SBU) The Senior Officials' Meeting concluded with a brief discussion of the declaration of the 2009 Forum for the Future that had been deliberated at the Rome sub-ministerial meeting on October 23. The chairs declined to open up the substance of the declaration to amendments or modification, but agreed to modify the Arabic translation on some points. The chairs indicated that the declaration would be presented in the Ministerial and would provide the groundwork for the Forum going forward into next year.

15. (SBU) Comment: Both Italy and Morocco worked extensively in the lead-up to the Forum to achieve a consensus document that incorporated the principles of the "Partnership Between G8-BMENA Governments and Civil Society" document. At the last moment, a number of countries in the region blocked efforts to reach a consensus declaration. In the end, a Chairmen's Statement of the Sixth Forum for the Future was presented at the ministerial. End comment.

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Forum Opening Session  
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¶16. (U) Opening the Forum on November 3, Fassi Fihri said the Forum continues to be a necessary dialogue between the G8 and BMENA countries that complements other dialogue frameworks. He lauded the active participation of civil society in this year's process.

¶17. (U) In the context of describing Morocco's own traditions of pluralism, Fassi Fihri saluted the American vision expressed in President Obama's Cairo speech, calling it a "harbinger to a new era" of relations based on justice, tolerance, human dignity, and working together to build bridges. He said interfaith and intercultural dialogue will strengthen the framework of relations between BMENA countries and the West; such dynamics can revitalize the Israeli/Palestinian peace process based on the Arab Peace Initiative and lead to an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. He repeated his previous condemnation of Israel's involvement in recent events at the Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, which he believes could fuel "demons of extremism and violence" in the region.

¶18. (SBU) Fassi Fihri said that in Morocco, NGOs and civil society actors are part of a comprehensive partnership with the government to develop the rule of law and human rights in keeping with the tolerant values of Islam, leading to an open society

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cushioned against extremism. He discussed women's rights but, as with his discussion of democracy on November 2, in the frame of national and cultural specificities and the appropriate pace of development. He stressed the importance of good local governance as a cornerstone of broader national democracy that preserves national unity and territorial integrity, adding "weak entities stand no chance."

¶19. (U) Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini described the Democracy Assistance Dialogue (DAD) as a successful initiative of the Forum and called for further concrete dimensions to the Forum. He praised the three preparatory workshops for generating proposals on developing the private sector, education, youth empowerment, improving the environment, human security, political participation, economic and social reforms, and women's empowerment.

¶10. (U) Frattini cited two significant proposals that emerged from the three workshops, and that should be addressed in next year's Forum: the creation of a Gender Institute to be hosted by a BMENA country and a consultative human security initiative to "manage diversity."

¶11. (U) Frattini stressed the role of youth as a resource and as one of the prime determinants of the future. He called for bridging the "education gap" in the BMENA region, and laid out the proposal for a G8-BMENA Education Network to boost best practices and exchanges between the G8 and BMENA countries. He also stated that G8 countries should be able to launch a visa facilitation policy for students. He concluded his remarks by saying the partnership the Forum represents should "put human beings at the very core of policies that unite rather than divide us."

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Secretary Clinton's Remarks  
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¶12. (U) Secretary Clinton lauded the government/civil society partnership, saying it should not be a rare sight and those present should look for ways to work together for the peoples they represent. She praised Morocco's reforms in women's rights, saying women could help lead the way in democratic institution building, economic growth, and the enlargement of civil society.

¶13. (U) The Secretary reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to broad engagement with Muslim communities around the world and outlined steps the United States is taking to follow up on the new beginning President Obama laid out in Cairo. She said that "true progress comes from within a society and cannot be imposed from the outside, and we know that change does not happen overnight." The Secretary made clear that the United States is focused on partnerships that promote civil society, entrepreneurship and economic development, educational opportunity, scientific and technological cooperation, women's empowerment, and interfaith cooperation. The Secretary stated: "Our work is based on empowering individuals rather than promoting ideologies; listening and embracing others' ideas rather than simply imposing our own; and pursuing partnerships that are sustainable and broad-based." She also reiterated the USG commitment to peace between Palestinians and Israelis and affirmed that she and the President

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believe peace is attainable.

¶14. (SBU) United Arab Emirates Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, who co-hosted last year's Forum, thanked Secretary Clinton for her remarks, for her personal involvement in issues dealing with women, youth, and employment, and personally thanked her for appointing a representative for Muslim communities. He also stated that the participants should engage on President Obama's openness policies, which he called the best option to deal with pessimism in the region.

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Three Major Themes, One Marathon Session  
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¶15. (U) Following the opening session, discussions were organized into the three themes of the preparatory workshops and included civil society and governmental interventions.

A) Political Reform, with a focus on democracy and local governance.

B) Economic Reform, with a focus on the impact of the financial crises on the BMENA region

C) Social Reform, with a focus on human development/human security and social issues.

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Political Reform  
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¶16. (U) Mounir Ben Salah, representing the NGO Moroccan Organization for Human Rights (known by its French acronym of OMDH), presented the outcomes of

the Rabat preparatory workshop, highlighting the importance of broadening the role of civil society in local governance and democracy, such as through direct election of local representatives. A broader role, based on pluralism, tolerance, and rule of law can encourage these values to spread beyond the local level to the regional and national levels. (Note: OMDH and Italian NGO No Peace without Justice served as civil society co-chairs of this year's Forum. End Note.)

¶17. (SBU) The head of the French delegation, former Foreign Minister (1978-1981) and current Senator Jean Francois-Poncet, spoke next, describing local governance as "the basic unit of infrastructure at the local level of democracy" and calling for decentralized cooperation among local government, civil society, and national government. He also stressed the necessity of involving women in democratic processes. He said local governance is a problematic issue for the Palestinians, and he called the Israeli/Palestinian conflict a "stumbling block" in the Middle East.

¶18. (SBU) The Russian representative followed, saying that without an independent Palestinian state and the return of the "occupied lands" and resolution of the Palestinian and other regional conflicts, democratic reforms in the region will be incomplete and lopsided. He called for a WMD-free zone in the region, and he discussed the already robust educational exchanges between Russia and the BMENA region. (Note: Uniquely among G8 countries, the Russian representative echoed almost word for word the language of BMENA governments regarding democracy, saying it must take into account the

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specific history of the countries, and NGOs and civil society should approach partnership with governments in a "non-confrontational" manner, aware of their role and their responsibilities. End note.)

¶19. (SBU) Next, the Hungarian representative stressed Hungary's positive post-Communist experiences with democracy and civil society. He recalled the role of local governance and activism in the expansion of civil society and democracy in Hungary and other central and eastern European countries, adding that Hungary's participation in foreign affairs was premised on Hungary sharing its positive results of democracy building.

¶20. (SBU) Qatar's State Minister for Foreign Affairs Ahmad ben Abdallah Al Mahmood began with praise for his country's progress in political reforms and civil society/government cooperation, especially on issues of health and education. He stated that Qatar appreciates President Obama's efforts toward a sustainable and comprehensive two-state solution in Palestine/Israel. He ended by formally announcing that Qatar will co-host the seventh Forum with Canada.

¶21. (SBU) Palestinian Authority (PA) Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki said reform should have political, economic, and social objectives, and that political reform is most likely to bear fruit if it results from a commitment to reform from within a society, as opposed to external pressure. He added that a deep-seated conviction for reform requires strong governance. He stressed that Israel's policies curtail PA reform efforts, but nonetheless felt that the PA has taken great strides in political, economic, and administrative reforms. He

said the PA is pursuing a reform and development plan with the private sector and NGOs - and is proud to do so under difficult circumstances. He declared a Palestinian state "inevitable" and called on "international authorities" to bring about Palestinian independence.

¶22. (SBU) Jordan's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nasser Judeh, said reform should be "home-grown" and requires the broad-based participation of government, the private sector, and civil society organizations. He said Jordan had made great strides in reform, singling out the importance of women's and youth issues. He said reform could be broadened if a Palestinian state came into being with Jerusalem as its capital in accordance with international resolutions, stating that governments need to "close ranks" regionally and internationally around this issue in order to broaden reform. He praised the commitment to the peace process of President Obama, Secretary Clinton, and Special Envoy Mitchell, and quoted President Obama's remarks at the United Nations General Assembly that the "occupation must be ended." He added that all present needed to support the PA government led by President Mahmoud Abbas against "Arab opposition," presumably referring to Hamas and its supporters.

¶23. (SBU) Lebanese Foreign Minister Fawzi Salloukh referred to Lebanon's tradition of pluralism and recent advances in democracy, stating that international observers agreed on the transparency and fairness of Lebanon's recent elections. He said BMENA nations must codify democratic practices to bring about the rule of law, an independent judiciary, and equal rights for all, to include decision-making positions for women in the private

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sector, government, and NGOs. He also said the development of democracy in the region could not be separated from the political climate, referring to the Arab-Israeli conflict. He said the world cannot continue to treat Israel separately from the international system of justice, and he called for a resolution to the Palestinian refugee problem by helping refugees find their way back to their "motherland," noting that Palestinian refugees present a problem not just for Palestine/ Israel, but for states with large refugee populations such as Lebanon. Finally, he made positive note of the conclusions of the recent United Nations Development Program [UNDP] Arab Human Development Report.

¶24. (U) Algeria's remarks were largely confined to reiterating prior themes of local governance, the necessity for home-grown democracy, and women's empowerment. The Mauritanian delegate made similar points later in the meeting and added that democracy should be seen not as an end, but as a means to devise social and political policies. The Mauritanian representative said the role of civil society needs to have a legal framework "to ensure complementarity, not confrontation." FM Fassi Fihri spoke from the chair to agree with the Mauritanian representative.

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A Dissenting Note from an Egyptian Activist  
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¶25. (SBU) Noted Egyptian political activist Saad Eddin Ibrahim made several key points during a civil society intervention:

A) Civil society groups place high hopes in



Secretary Clinton's statements.

B) Civil society organizations consider democracy as the primary concern. It is a facet of development, stability, and peace. In apparent reference to many of the remarks of BMENA governments (and Russia), he was emphatic that democracy should not be played down.

C) Democracy cannot be imported or exported, but can be supported. The community of democracies should support democracy. He said that "first world" democracies should support democracy in the region, and should not support unfair and unjust regimes for the sake of stability, which "leads to a blind alley."

D) Given the chance, the people of the Middle East do not shy away from practicing democracy, citing numerous elections in the region in the last few years. He said civil society activists believe elections are decisive not only for individual countries, but for the region. He called for Forum partner nations to put the upcoming Iraqi and Egyptian elections on their agendas, and to ensure that the elections are transparent and fair.

E) There are three forces facing democracy: unfair and unjust governments, extremists, and civil society. He called on governments to support civil society as the force that stands between the unfair/unjust governments and the extremists.

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Wrapping up the Political Session  
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¶26. (SBU) The Switzerland representative made brief

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remarks about the country's experience with decentralized local government in the form of cantons, and gave examples of involvement with capacity building in the region but added that violent conflict hinders UN Millennium Development Goals. The Swiss also offered to support the Gender Institute.

¶27. (U) Spain's Secretary of State Angel Losada said the financial crisis should not change the agenda for the Forum, which he linked to the UN Millennium Development Goals.

¶28. (SBU) UAE State Minister Reem Ibrahim Al Hashimi announced support for the creation of the regional BMENA Gender Institute, and said the UAE will pay for 50% of the Institute. (Note: While the UAE did not offer to host the Institute during this intervention, UAE officials separately told the U.S. delegation the UAE would be willing to host the Gender Institute. End note.)

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NGOs Assess Economic and Social Reform/Human Security  
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¶29. (SBU) Houda Chalak of the Lebanese NGO Civic Action Coalition reiterated the need for cooperation between civil society and the BMENA governments, the need for support from the most industrialized governments during the financial crisis, and the important role women and youth play in the movement toward a democratic society. She said human

development and human security require economic development, rule of law, and sound educational policies. She stated that to deal with the economic crisis, regional initiatives supporting small and medium enterprises were needed, and that in turn these enterprises needed a climate of freedom to bring about entrepreneurship, which she linked to democratic participation and guarantees for the rights of the people.

¶30. (U) Chalak outlined the two concrete proposals from the Beirut preparatory workshop: establishing a network for entrepreneurs to serve as a regional forum for sharing expertise in specialized projects and best practices; and developing, in cooperation with existing institutes, a training center and state of the art institute dedicated to small and medium enterprises.

¶31. (SBU) Bakhtiar Amin, an ethnic Kurd who began his remarks in Kurdish, represented Iraqi civil society. He stated that the politicization of religion was a threat to economic development. He stressed the need to avoid violence, to develop multi-lateral programs to develop human security, and to make the most of cultural diversity, going beyond tolerance toward active participation of different groups in national and regional cultures and citing as a goal the development of a regional diversity center. He said democratic reform would not be complete without a solution to the Kurdish issue.

¶32. (SBU) Ali Bin Somaik Al Murri of the Qatari NGO National Committee for Human Rights praised the Forum, saying a new starting point was needed with more achievements and accomplishments. He stressed that democratic reform was the duty of all present at the Forum. Al Murri said that against the

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backdrop of the financial crisis, the region needed to adopt approaches centered on human security in order to develop the BMENA region's great potential and resources.

¶33. (SBU) Mohsen Marzouk, a Tunisian national who heads the Qatar-based NGO Arab Democracy Foundation, said a feasibility study on human security was necessary. He said the Forum is a starting point, but it needs to develop a short list of priorities and approaches that use civil society as an actual partner. It also needs to determine why civil society is not currently a full participant in the Forum.

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Governments, IOs Concerned about Economic Crisis  
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¶34. (SBU) Canadian Foreign Minister Lawrence Cannon cited statistics from the IMF to make the case that the BMENA region has weathered the world financial crisis better than other regions and continues to have good prospects for growth. He described Canada's continued willingness to support both civil society and governments in the region, including by urging large banks to help the poorest countries. He said the crisis shows that G8 and BMENA have no choice but to work together in a forum such as Forum, and stated that Canada was looking forward to co-chairing the Forum next year.

¶35. (SBU) The Yemeni government representative drew a distinction between local governance - of which he approved - and separatist movements, which he said



violate the territorial integrity of countries.

¶36. (SBU) Bahraini Foreign Minister Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa said sustainable economic growth in a secure framework is essential and warned that the effects of the world financial crisis will linger and affect employment, access to capital, energy costs, and corporate governance. He said the region requires a flexible, well-trained work force and a stable regulatory framework to protect economies from future shocks. To this end, he explicitly called for education reform and free trade in the BMENA region in order to create jobs and harmonize regulations. He said civil society can assist governments by encouraging popular support for these initiatives.

¶37. (SBU) The representative of Japan (co-host of the 2008 Forum) highlighted the country's contributions to the IMF and other international organizations to alleviate the effects of the global economic crisis. The Japanese delegate spoke about the need for the region to work to combat climate change, a theme some other speakers briefly touched upon. Japan was also the only government to stress BMENA and G8 cooperation to combat piracy off the coast of Africa and Yemen.

¶38. (SBU) The Netherlands delegate reacted positively to the proposal for the Gender Institute, pledged support, and said that the Netherlands would donate USD 1 million to the Foundation for the Future. The delegate from Denmark praised civil society and NGO involvement, speaking as well about climate change with reference to the December 2009 meeting in Copenhagen and the issue of water resources in the BMENA region.

¶39. (SBU) The delegate from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) said participants need to have

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creative and flexible ideas about reform. Without naming names, he said some countries have double standards when it comes to reforms, and others are genuinely helpful. He then spoke at length about the Palestinian cause. Finally, he spoke in favor of increased opening of markets between the BMENA countries and the G8, and of the need for continued scientific research, development, and education. He was followed by a speaker from the Arab Monetary Fund, who spoke in general about the effect of the global economic crisis on the BMENA region, noting a 50 percent loss in petroleum revenues and placing responsibility for the origins of the crisis on western countries. He said the savings of the oil-rich nations of the BMENA are alleviating the impact of the crisis, and these BMENA governments should pursue a monetary policy of injecting liquidity into and consolidating regional banks. He found the current efforts not sufficient, and called for greater coordination on these issues through the Forum to recover economic growth.

¶40. (SBU) The Egyptian delegate described shrinking growth rates in Egypt. He called for national control mechanisms (e.g., job creation programs) for the economy to support the social safety net, although he added there should not be any overregulation or exaggeration. He called for the liberalization of trade and the speeding up of reform of financial institutions, especially early warning systems. Like the Bahraini delegate, he spoke of civil society as a sector with which governments could partner to reach out and promote reform. He called for the G8 to correct financial

and monetary systems, taking into account emerging and developing countries and putting aside the principle of reciprocity in trade. He spoke of increased cooperation with the G8 in health care and poverty alleviation, saying these steps would make developing countries part of the solution, and not just a part of the problem.

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NGOs Unhappy with Pace of Dialogue  
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¶41. (SBU) The representative of the Arab Network of Democracy was the next speaker. He said that six years after the founding of the Forum, a true partnership mechanism had yet to be developed between BMENA governments and civil society. Thus, civil society organizations cannot be held responsible for problems of process. Echoing Egyptian political activist Saad Eddin Ibrahim, he said democracy was not at the center of the Forum process and that there have been some steps backward with respect to democracy's place within the Forum process. He called for a dialogue without restrictions on civil society organizations, not one among "deaf and dumb." He said governments should not fear civil society organizations, which are not trying to revolutionize but to contribute to the rule of law along with governments.

¶42. (SBU) A representative of the Al-Kawakibi Democracy Transition Center (Arabic acronym KADEM) spoke next, saying the Forum Partnership Document was important, but that it was too often ignored by BMENA governments. He also said they had attached too many restrictions to it. He implored the G8 governments to keep promoting the document. This prompted a reply from the Bahraini delegation, who insisted that government/civil society dialogue had made achievements and that there was no "dialogue of the deaf and dumb." FM Fassi Fihri also disagreed

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passionately with the civil society speakers, and claimed all BMENA governments were in direct dialogue with civil society. He said that if civil society groups feel that in some countries or areas there are delays in the dialogue, he wanted to reassure them that dialogue exists to develop society and strengthen democracy.

¶43. (SBU) The next speaker represented the Mauritanian NGO "Intellectual Club for Democracy." Noting differences in elections in the region - and differing levels of transparency in those elections - he called on the G8 and other organizations to build civil society capacity. Following this, a speaker from the Bahrain Transparency Society hailed Secretary Clinton's speech and declared that a lack of transparency helped explain the collapse of the world economy in 2008. He called on government ministries, legislative assemblies, civil society, and the private sector to come together and act to enhance transparency.

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Final Interventions  
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¶44. (SBU) Government representatives made a few more remarks, mostly reiterating themes mentioned above. The Sudanese delegate said the country was considering reforms in various areas and preparing for elections in 2010 under delicate circumstances. The delegate said no peace would be possible if the people of Darfur were not living stable lives.

Tunisia held itself up as a model of development and social and educational reform; the Tunisian delegate also briefly touched on legal protections and NGO involvement with the disabled. The UK delegate supported the Danish comments on climate change and acknowledged BMENA requests for more equitable outcomes. He also stressed global health and infant mortality reduction, supported the creation of the Gender Institute given that there are still restrictive laws towards women in the BMENA region, and detailed the hundreds of millions of pounds the UK spends on civil society development in the region (including trade unions). The UK delegate gave support to U.S. efforts on the Palestinian/Israeli conflict, saying that this was "last best chance" for peace in this generation.

¶45. (SBU) The delegate from Afghanistan stressed the country's advances despite its difficult circumstances, saying it had just completed a challenging electoral process and would now focus on forming an inclusive government, fighting corruption at all levels, and extending the hand of peace and reconciliation, all with the support of the international community and keeping in mind realistic goals.

¶46. (SBU) The Yemeni NGO "Human Rights Information and Training Center" (HRITC) representative said he was surprised to hear other delegates positively discussing civil society participation in the Forum, because this year civil society had only a minor role. Unlike this year, civil society could in the past reach decision-making levels within the Forum, he said. He reiterated the need for equal and constructive dialogue, unlike this year's passive dialogue. He said more than rhetoric is needed, because building the future is a shared responsibility between governments and civil society.

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#### Confusion and Anger as Session Draws to a Close

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¶47. (SBU) Going off agenda, Moroccan FM Fassi Fihri started to give closing remarks. He said that no single model can be exported from north to south, and he reiterated themes of exchange and dialogue. He made reference to the "unhelpful" situation in Palestine, implying this as big a hindrance to regional reform as the global economic crisis.

¶48. (SBU) Fassi Fihri ended his remarks by saying he was duty-bound to listen to the civil society representatives' opinions and take them as partners. Much to the surprise of the delegates and the remaining speakers, including the two civil society co-chairs for the Forum and Canada as the next G8 president, he proceeded to thank the participants and close the ministerial. After some confusion, the error was pointed out to Fassi Fihri and he opened the floor to the remaining speakers, but by that time many delegations had left.

¶49. (SBU) The head of No Peace Without Justice, former Italian and EU Senator Marco Pannella, was clearly perturbed and limited his brief remarks to expressions of thanks to the Italian government and the Government of Morocco, and he suggested that perhaps he would be given more time to speak at next year's Forum. The speaker from the Moroccan Organization for Human Rights (OMDH) also was agitated and spoke in an angry tone. She said she

would have liked to discuss the civil society meeting in Casablanca, as actual and effective partnership is supposed to be crystal clear. She was particularly upset that the "Partnership Between G8-BMENA Governments and Civil Society" document was not formally submitted at the Forum. The final substantive remarks came from the Canadian delegate, who said the priorities outlined in the Forum Chairmen's Statement would help Canada determine the themes for next year's Forum. He ended by stating that Canada calls for a lasting and just peace in the Middle East.

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Comment  
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¶50. (SBU) There was a significant disconnect between many of the civil society organizations and BMENA governments at this year's Forum. Talk of civil society responsibility and accountability seemed to be a call for civil society groups to censor themselves and avoid confrontation with governments. Talk of "home-grown" models of democracy suggested that BMENA governments were restricting the meaning of "democracy" in a self-serving fashion. Civil society organizations were upset with this tone, and many openly complained of what they perceived to be a diminished role for civil society in this year's Forum. They cited as lack of tangible progress in advancing the civil society/government partnership the failure of the Chairs to formally approve the Partnership Document. While the BMENA governments praised dialogue with civil society, they clearly envisioned an instrumental use for civil society groups to serve as intermediaries to promote government policies. End comment.

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